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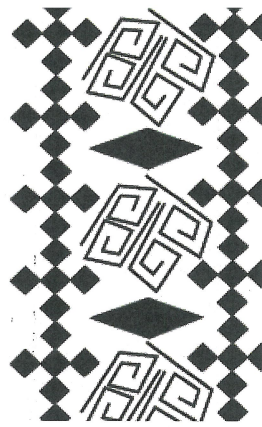
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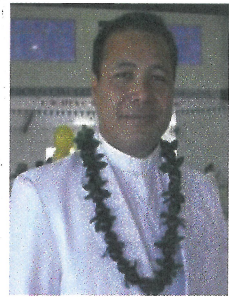
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## A Theology of 'Talalasi: Challenging the 'One Truth' Ideology of the Empire

### The Role of the 'One Truth' Theology

Since when did we think that there is only one true story? Since when did we institutionalise the idea that there is only one true culture? Since when did we internalise the notion that there is only one true religion and that is my religion? What makes us think that we can define the truth for others including their stories? Since when did this idea of one truth invade our knowledge systems? Greek ontology, which has expressed itself fully in the Aristotelian logic, and has housed itself safely in Christian doctrines and theologies, promoted the idea that there is one universal truth. Such universal truth can be found in the process of eliminating of the opposite. According to Greek thinking, for light to be light, it has to eliminate its opposite: darkness. For God to be God, flesh has to be eliminated. This thinking was reinforced in the monotheistic understanding of God



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grounded in philosophical notions. That is, if God is the 'Ultimate Ground of Being', the 'Unmoved Mover,' or the 'All-seeing deity', then surely God is not confident with flesh. As a result, God was structured around the notions of totality, linearity, and consolidation.<sup>1</sup> We were taught in the Church that when we think of God, we must think not in terms of the Persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but rather always think first of a God who exists as 'One'. Hence we must think first of divine substance and only then we can think of God as relation. God becomes clear and true to us when he is viewed in isolation from us. The more God is removed from flesh, the more he is affirmed as the true God. Hence is a reduction of the Trinity into one. This is accompanied by a hermeneutical clean slate approach where any perception of God must strip off all that is finite, including cultural and ethnic associations, to get a pure and true picture of God.<sup>2</sup>

In such view, God has to be prior to relation. Relation is 'not' a necessary condition of defining the truth about God. For God to relate to what is not God would mean a weak and vulnerable deity. It would mean that God would be like one of us, sinful and corrupt. Or to use Schneider's words, it would mean "God stuck in a consequence of eternity."<sup>3</sup> Now we cannot speak of God except of power, rule, and supremacy. While these divine attributes are possible in God, they are philosophical notions that can be used to support universal claims and ideologies of the empire.<sup>4</sup> The example is the one truth ideology. Such understanding does not take the embodied idea of the tino, toto, ma aano (body, blood, and flesh) found in the Incarnation faith as the fundamental criteria for defining the being of God. It followed therefore that a religion that best expresses such God is a true religion. The culture that can be used as a means to introduce such God is the only true culture.



## Reducing Everything into 'One'

While this idea of one truth gives warrant to universal claims, the result is the reduction of everything into one. This is inherited continually into colonial totalitarian theologies. Such theologies support the idea of oneness engineered by the fixed notion of truth. Here is the beginning of totalizing God, religion, theology, and culture. Now we see that most religions, including Christianity, and most cultures, including Pacific cultures, have institutionalised this idea of one truth in their knowledge, educational, political, church, and village/tribal systems. Marginal cultures and peoples have been taught, even today, to align themselves with such truth or else they will become the false other. And as a matter of fact, it is well documented in Pacific history that these cultures and peoples were caught in the trap because they also wanted this "empire God" to support their political and religious agendas. This is still the reality today.

This one truth ideology is today appropriated in the many colonial and neo-colonial systems. Thanks to Christianity, for example the neo-liberal economic system, which has become the basis of globalization, is arguably the present form of this one truth ideology. It thrives in the current capitalist economic system. We are led to believe that this global market economic system is the only system that can sustain the wellbeing of all nations. The more a nation abides with the universal economic and development policies, the more their wellbeing is improved. However the world has seen not the improvement of the majority's wellbeing, but improvement of the system that supports a few. This one truth ideology has been promoted by wealthy nations such as the United States of America, and wealthy global economic institutions such as International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, since they benefit from it. <sup>5</sup>Resources often flow from the margin to benefit the centre. What is evident is that the majority suffer because

“the market sees only the need for continually increased profit.”<sup>6</sup> It responds only to the need of the institution and not to the needs of the local communities. Fortunately, some Pacific countries, such as Vanuatu, have bravely retrieved a more relational worldview of wellbeing entrenched in its indigenous culture as the most economically secured way to give solution to poverty and economic injustice.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, despite efforts by local councils of chiefs as well as governments, economic disparities are rampant. And the greater the injustice, the greater the social and health problems, the crime rates, even the numbers of people in prison in the local communities.<sup>8</sup>

These many crises linked to the one truth ideology demonstrate the importance for the Church to usher in a new way of thinking and a hermeneutical approach that takes seriously the idea of diversity and multiplicity needed to guide local communities and governments implement relational economic plans and policies. The Church needs to propose a moral compass for each country that gives our local political and economic systems a relational conscience. A good start would be to reconstruct a more relational theology of God, one that challenges the philosophical God of the one truth ideology and gives directions to life.

## A THEOLOGY OF TALALASI

To reconstruct a relational theology of God, a church in the Pacific must revisit the relational consciousness of the Pacific people entrenched in culture, scripture, as well as church living traditions such as the Trinity and Christology. It is important that these three pillars underpin the proposed theology of God’s relationality. In the Pacific, relationality is the overarching value that encompasses almost, if not, all Pacific cultures. Here I want to limit myself to the Samoan understanding of relationality found in the concept of talalasi in order to propose a theology of God that aims to challenge the one truth ideology.



## **Talalasi in the Samoan Culture**

In Samoa, *tala* is 'story', 'version,' or 'narrative' and *lasi* is 'diverse' or 'multiple'. Let me discuss the word *lasi* since it is that word that changes the whole character of the word *tala*. For *lasi* to mean 'diverse,' or 'multiple,' it presupposes both beauty and relation. The phrase *ua lasi le vaai* (a view full of multiple meanings) refers to the fact that beauty is found in multiple meanings. For example, when a performance is *lasi*, it means a performance is full of variety and diversity. It suggests multiple meanings. For a performance to be *lasi*, all hidden and revealed meanings must be acknowledged and embraced by the viewer. One meaning cannot deny the other. Each is part of the whole, which makes the performance a perfect performance. The designation perfect performance depends on how the viewer creatively reinterprets the performance from his/her context. A performance without the designation *lasi* is one that lacks creativity and variety.

## **The Undermining of Talalasi**

The importance of *talalasi* in Samoa has been undermined since the emergence of the idea of *tala moni* (one true version of the story). With the movement towards centralizing the gospel within the Church, the attitude towards *talalasi* changed. The Church in particular condemned many indigenous stories as false and evil. Even myths, which used to portray spiritual and symbolic significance of life and narrate the sacred history of the indigenous people, were labelled as not true. One of the measures of this judgment is that of rational scientific precision. Such measures can again be traced back to Greek ontology where truth is found when one is able to distinguish between fiction or invented stories and facts. In doing that, one must strip all mythical elements (or supernatural elements) to arrive at what is factual and true. The problem is that by doing so one has stripped stories from their function of narrating multiple meanings. It means therefore that there will only be one meaning of a story. Such one-ning of meaning makes a single version



the only true version of the story. Hence the story collapses into oneness.

The same goes with the hermeneutical activity of the Church. Pacific theologians have been encouraging the church to think that there is only one meaning of a story of the bible. That meaning was already given by the biblical author (s) who wrote the story. To get the meaning of such stories, the island reader must work first to get the meaning intended by the author or the meaning shaped by the social historical context of the author and only when such meaning is achieved can he/she apply it to the present context. In other words, the island reader cannot change the given meaning. The only role of the island reader is to contextualise or indigenise that given meaning. Hence the involvement of the island reader to reconstruct creatively the meaning of the story from his/her context is delayed until the last step, the application. This approach is not only colonial, but also consolidates the idea that there is only one truth found in a given meaning, while the island reader is not allowed to change or challenge such truth.

### **Retrieving Talalasi**

One way of reviving the talalasi consciousness is that suggested by TuiAtua. Meanings of stories are couched in allusion. Allusion “was intended to suggest many meanings and to tantalise the intellect.” Stories, in the Samoan understanding, are meant to open space for multiple ways of interpretation and to invite multiple meanings.<sup>9</sup> Stories lose their power of transformation when there is an attempt to restrict specifically the meaning to one generation. Such attempts destroy the ability of future generations to suggest a new meaning for the same story in a creative way applicable to their context and life.

In Samoa, when someone recites the most popular saying e talalasi le atunuu (there are many national versions of a story), it is referring to the fact that there are many versions of the same story. Because of that, a single story always has multiple meanings.



Hence, each receiver of the story must deal with the fact that all meanings and versions of the same story are truth-bearing. This idea of multiple meanings is found in the hermeneutical approach often taken by those involved in the process of faafaletui (sharing, retelling, reconstructing stories). The faafaletui process reconstructs creatively the meaning of stories and myths of the past from the present context. Meanings are not rigid. The one who takes up a story and reconstructs it will give it a new meaning. This contributes to the ongoing reception of the same story from generation to generation. That is how the Samoans kept alive their stories, myths, legends, and history. In this sense, truth is always relational. It is relative to the context and perspective of the receiver of the story. It is not something abstractive or universal.

### **Talalasi in the Triune God**

The doctrine of the Trinity proposes a more relational image of God. Kallistos Ware rightly argues that “The one God of the Christian Church cannot be conceived except as Trinity.”<sup>10</sup> In this Trinitarian conception, we must always believe and talk about God as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is not some philosophical postulate in the sense we must guess first through reason that he is ‘one’ and only then we talk about how the Son and Spirit relate to that God. Indeed we know God through Christ in the Spirit. To miss the Father, Son, and Spirit is to miss the whole idea of God as relational.

Now talking about the Father, Son, and Spirit brings us to the Incarnation. In Trinitarian theology, we cannot understand God without the Incarnation. That was Athanasius’ contribution to theology. He suggested that the Incarnation, especially the passion, cross, and the death of the Son must determine our understanding of who God is.<sup>11</sup> The Son is at the centre of defining who God is. In other words the Incarnation introduces a talalasi life of God that is ground-up, a life that embraces the depth of our diverse beings as well as our stories.

It is also fundamental to demolishing the idea of God as monarchical and top-down.

### God Liu Tino Tagata

In Samoa, God incarnated is translated 'le Atua liu tino tagata' (Atua is 'God', liu is 'transform', tino is 'body', and tagata is 'human form'). Two important facts need to be affirmed. First is that for God to liu tino means that the whole of God became embodied in human form through Christ. It doesn't mean that one part of him (humanity) became localized while the other part (divinity) is still in suspense to save God from the consequence of losing divinity.<sup>12</sup> Tino involves blood, flesh, bones, and body. To liu tino means the whole of God is fully localized as a toto ma aano (blood and flesh). God is not a concept or idea. God is tagata.

Second is that for God to liu tino tagata means therefore that God is a 'relational God'. Tagata in the Pacific is always relational.<sup>13</sup> It is never individual. The word tino can function as a hermeneutical tool here to reconstruct the Incarnation. In Samoa as well as the Pacific, tino refers to a body of relations that constitute a person. In this regard, one's father, mother, extended family, land, ancestors, spirits, environment, are a body of relations that constitute a Pacific tagata. These are all parts of the tino. And they are called itu tino. So the idea of embodiment is very strong in the Pacific understanding of tagata. Because the tagata embodies all itu tino, to deny one itu tino is to deny oneself.

This is probably the reason why the translators of the Samoan bible translate the Body of Christ, the church, as the Tino o Keriso. The word tino has a powerful hermeneutical function in defining the relational nature of the church. When the Samoan bible says, Aua foi o le tino e le se itu tino e tasi lea, ae peitai o itu tino e lasi, translated 'Indeed the body does not consist of one member but of many' (1 Corinthians 12:14), it is referring to the fact each itu tino are diverse yet integrally part of the other. For the foot to deny





the hand from belonging to the tino is the same as denying oneself. All these itu tino not only constitute a tagata, but are also all embodied in a tagata. To see a tagata is to see not just an individual, but the whole. Therefore to say that God liu tino tagata means not only that the whole of God was 'in' the Son (Father and Spirit), but also in the Son we see a relational image of God who embraces all itu tino.

The question is: Does God's liu tino tagata diminish his divinity? Does it minimise God's being? In Greek logic, the answer is 'YES.' Because the divinity is now engulfed in the tino (which is matter), therefore God must either be divine or human. He cannot be both. This either/or way of thinking has dominated theology for a long time. In the talalasi consciousness, the answer is 'NO'. Far from disproving God, the liu tino tagata affirms he is God. In other words, for God to be God is to be a tagata. In other words, to be relational. This is evident in Paul's discussion of the kenotic being of God in Philippians 2. For him, the more Christ goes deeper into the diverse stories of human suffering, pain, and death, the more he is glorified and honoured as God. It doesn't mean that Jesus was divine, then became human when he incarnated, then became divine again when returned to the Father. However it means that God became fully divine in human form. By being a servant Christ is made Lord of all. That is why the 'cross' is the defining point of understanding God's glory and honour as was addressed by Paul to the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). In the cross, all the divine itu tino (Father and Spirit) were present in the tagata of the Son, making the cross not a mere Christ event, but rather a Trinitarian event. With the presence of the divine itu tino in him, Christ is both tagata and God. In this sense, God is relational, living amongst us.

### **Theolocalogy**

The word tino and tagata reinforce a more practical twist to the theology of Incarnation. Tino in Samoa not only refers to a body of relations but also to praxis.

This is found in the term *faatino* (to do, to perform, to act, to execute) or the word *faitino* (to become embodied, concrete, real). For God to *liu tino tagata* means that he is not a hypothesis. Rather he is actually real and concrete; a God who is actually *faitino* and the one who *faatino*. A *talalasi* consciousness suggests that any attempt to theologize should be a ‘theolocology’ (theo is ‘God’, loca is ‘local context’, and logy is ‘story’). Theolocology challenges God’s imposed story often represented in the traditional term ‘theology’. In theolocology, ‘God’s story’ through Christ in the Spirit (theos) is accepted and reconstructed from the perspective of the ‘local story’ of the people (loca) in order to produce a critical and liberating ‘new story’ (logy). Some would argue that this approach can be relativistic in the sense it takes the context of the people as the primary datum. Marion Grau argues that this might be “prone to inflicting damage when we claim to understand and thus control the...expression of the Divine.”<sup>14</sup> However, I argue that there is no other approach that is faithful to the Incarnation faith except that which takes what conditions us in the Pacific such as ecological and economic injustices as the starting point in doing theology. But such approach must always be a dialogical back and forth hermeneutical process where we read the context in the light of theos (Triune God as witnessed in Scripture and in Church received traditions), and we read theos from the perspective of the community’s location. The result should be a new story of liberation and redemption. In this way, our story becomes God’s story through Christ in the Spirit, while God’s story becomes our story through Christ in the Spirit. Christ is at the centre of this mutual exchange. Christ is God’s story for us, while Christ healed and renewed our story for God. Theolocology is the continuation of that exchange and renewal of our story.

In other words, theolocology challenges a top-down approach to truth that is not real and suggests a more;’ praxis ground-up approach in understanding and imaging God in the world. It requires the widely diverse *Tino o Keriso* to listen to many *itu tino*



whose stories have been erased, invaded, and silenced by its system, or stories that are continually whispered into invisibility in fear of repercussions. Marcia Shoop reinforces this point in her book *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ* (2010) where she argues that the Church's denial of the stories of suffering men and women is a betrayal of the Trinitarian love and compassion. Such denial has been the responsibility of the theology of the Church. Put in the language of this article, Shoop argues that in order to tackle this disembodied mentality, the Tino o Keriso needs to take seriously in its theology the diverse stories of each itu tino through the process of re-memembering or reconnecting members that have been trivialized and compromised by our systems and ideologies.<sup>15</sup> That is the role of theolocalogy. It critically challenges theologies that conspire to condemn the painful stories of those who are part of our tino. For example climate change in Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands, the colonial atrocities in West Papua, Kanaki, and Maohi, the nuclear testing in Maohi and French Polynesia, and the neo-colonialism in all islands, to name a few.

In the Incarnation, we see the talalasi life of God through Christ in the Spirit. By becoming a tagata in our diverse human forms and contexts, it therefore means that all stories, whether religious, cultural, social, political, or racial, are 'truth-bearing.' There is not one tala of truth, but many. Hence, diversity and multiplicity are fundamental to the being of God. The Incarnation does not amount to oneness or uniformity. Rather it should amount to talalasi and appreciation of otherness. In the Incarnational faith, the promise is that tino matters and that every itu tino must be embraced in order to experience the love of the Triune God.

### **A Talalasi Solution to Two Extremes: Individualism vs Communalism**

The problem we see in the West is that it has lost being communal extreme view draws on the Greek logic that to be is always prior to relation. In the axiom I think therefore I am, the 'I' must think first



whether a relationship fits his/her standards, life, and framework, and only then he/she relates. The summary of this extreme position is clearly demonstrated in John Zizioulas' words: "you first are and then you relate."<sup>16</sup> In this sense, diversity can be very unhealthy. The self is too centralized to the extent of denying others.

The problem we have in the Pacific is the opposite. The Pacific has put much emphasis on unity that it fails to give individuals the freedom to be themselves or to define their otherness. This is termed communalism. We see so much turmoil in Pacific communities because the rights of individuals are marginalized, denied, or even taken away by force. For example, in fear of losing unity, Pacific churches continue to uphold a system that not only develops the institution at the expense of its members but also a system that denies transparency and accountability. Individual members including ministers are silenced from freely expressing their views in fear of damaging the church's reputation. In some churches, women are not given the right to participate effectively in the ordination ministry. Village and tribal councils have not only enforced rules that continue to give power to male members to rule over women, but also enforced a system that denies the rights of minority groups. Diversity and multiplicity has become weaker and weaker in the Pacific because of the sole emphasis on unity. Hence institutions and hierarchies have become centralized to the extent of denying life to others who need it most.

A possible solution to the problem can be found in the life of the Trinity. In a talalasi way of life is premised on God's relationality, God does not exist first, and only then he relates. God is nothing other than relationality. Relationality makes God, God. Zizioulas put's it correctly that without relationality, "it would not be possible to speak of the being of God."<sup>17</sup> God's relationality implies both connection and distinction, both unity and diversity. This both/and way of thinking, with roots that in the Patristic fathers, especially the Cappadocians, is crucial to upholding both extremes.

<sup>18</sup>In this Patristic idea, each individual *itu tino* (either the Father or Son or the Spirit) are distinct in their stories. The Father's story is one of salvation. The Son's story is one of performing salvation. The Spirit's story is one of giving that salvation. However, each story is not totally removed from the other, but rather perichoretically interrelated, meaning the stories co-inhere, making these stories a united story. Therefore C.S. Song is right to claim that "God is story."<sup>19</sup> In this sense, each divine *itu tino* are distinct without losing their unity. They are also united without losing their individuality. In the light of this thinking, where there is total unity without distinction is not relational. Likewise where there is total distinction without unity there is no relational.

Because of this both/and mentality in the Trinity, therefore one's story becomes a story of the whole *triune tino*. The Son's story of pain and suffering, even his story of the cross, has become part of the story of the whole *Triune tino*. That is why the suffering of one *itu tino* (Son) is the suffering of the whole. Jurgen Moltmann calls it the suffering love of the whole.<sup>20</sup> The one *itu tino* (Son) cannot exist apart from the whole *Triune tino* (Father, Son, and Spirit), and the whole *Triune tino* cannot exist without that *itu tino*. The Father, Son, and Spirit are woven together in a mutual relationality so that they can neither deny the other (Western extreme) nor dominate the other (Pacific extreme). Hence Christ in the Spirit is the summary of the Father's story of salvation. In the next section, we will see how God implants his relational *talalasi* nature explicitly in creation.

### **Talalasi in the Biblical Story of Creation**

The story of creation in Genesis 1-2:3 begins not with creation out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) but rather with creation reduced to nothing. It begins with a reduction force called chaos; a formless void. Catherine Keller is right to argue that chaos plays a role in the Genesis narrative. However I do not agree with the idea that chaos should be given a central

role in defining the coming of the world into being.<sup>21</sup> Chaos represents a system of oneness where there is total fusion without distinction, total mixture without separation; a system that empties everything into a formless void. In other words, chaos is a form of relational poverty, a poverty that is now also engulfing our world by force. The darkness that appears over the surface of the deep introduces a dominant totalitarian force that stands by itself without the need of the other: light. If darkness is to stand alone then light is consumed in it only to be separated on the first day of creation. In fact this consuming element is also found in the word colonization. It comes from the root word colon meaning to digest. Hence colonization is the digestion of one culture by another, one religion by another, or one economy by another.

The reduction and consuming of everything into one reappears in the Tower of Babel where the unity that people seek is a “coercive unity without freedom and without diversity.”<sup>22</sup> Hinne Wagenaar challenges the long standing interpretation by Claus Westermann and Gerhard von Rad that the scattering of the Tower of Babel is a divine punishment for humans for overstepping their limits. Wagenaar argues that rather than punishment, this is actually God’s intervention to dismantle an unhealthy tower power unity to liberate the victims of the Babel colonial system. Hence from one people with one language, God introduced many people with diverse languages.<sup>23</sup> For the creation story to begin with chaos is a reminder of the world’s constant lack of an intrinsic hold of talalasi. Sin therefore, introduced in the latter chapters of Genesis, is the absence of relationality and a lapseback to the power of oneness; a return to relational poverty.

### **Va-rious Creation**

The talalasi being of God becomes explicit through an introduction of a va-rious type of creation. Various is different from Va-rious. The former refers to different varieties that do not always relate. Various is different from Va-rious. The former refers to different varieties that do not always relate.

The later means that there is diversity but a diversity that can only be defined in mutual relationality. In the narrative, God's reaction to the world's deterioration towards oneness is relationality. On the first day, God starts with separation, giving light and darkness their spaces of existence and free movement. God's act of diversification is an inescapable revelation of his nature in a world controlled by the power of oneness. This will continue throughout creation. God in this sense va-riously creates the world. Va-rious creation means God separates light and darkness, but they can only exist in relation to the other. Hence they can only exist because of a va, a mutual reciprocal respect and honouring of the other. Without this va, creation would lapse back into either oneness (a position held by the Pacific) or develop into various individuals (position held by the West).

In the account, God does not eliminate darkness from creation. This is a mistake we often do in our theological interpretation. Elimination is not part of God's talalasi nature. God still includes darkness, but rather decentralizes it, stripping it of its claim to superiority. When God said, "let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), the phrase 'let be' plays a central role in God's va-rious creation. To 'let be' means to set free from the coercion of a system that privileges control.<sup>24</sup> God's role was to liberate light from the control of oneness in order to let light be light. At the same time, God also liberates darkness from the power of oneness to rightly take its place in creation.

Darkness and light are now given distinct spaces and names (1:4). But in a va-rious creation they do not just exist as various individuals. Rather they should exist in an economy of relationality wherethey give and receive from the other both respect and honour. In doing this, God gives them va-rious roles in creation. Light gives birth to day by introducing morning, and darkness gives birth to night by introducing evening (1:4).Hence both their roles in creation contribute to forming what we call day (combination of light and darkness).



For darkness, God has given a new way of being in the world, realizing new dimensions of relationality as it takes on responsibility for the other. Likewise for light, God's va-rious creation means that the freedom of diversity is not the freedom to be, but rather the freedom to relate.

The 'let be' act of God in the first five days where God separates water, land, seas, sky, animals, as well as birds is followed by the phrase "God saw it was good". Hence the good judgment appears only when everything is 'let be'. In this sense, a good creation is one that privileges the economy of relationality. More than just creating, God was re-adjusting, transforming, and freeing creation from the rule of the one truth ideology, a rule that has no va.

Towards the end, the 'let be' act of God immediately changed to the 'let us' in verse 26. When God said, "let us make man in our image", the 'let us' is a divine resolve for internal re-adjustments in divine being, a re-adjustment whereby God now agrees to share his own divine image to that which is not God. This is the beginning of God's openness to the world. Such image is the image of relationality. It is also a proposed model for internal re-adjustments to any system and a challenge to theologies of God structured around the notion of totality and stasis. A relational God is one who relates because it is in God's relationality that makes God, God.

When God created humanity, it was a va-rious creation of both male and female (1:27), a huge leap from the either/or mentality found in the system controlled by the power of oneness. Therefore, the rule of humanity over creation should be shaped by the nature of God as talalasi where sharing, reciprocal giving and receiving, as well as respecting and giving space for the other to exist are fundamental. With this readjustment, humanity can protect creation from going back to chaos, from total fusion, and from emptying all stories into a formless void and suffering. To do that, humanity must initially protect itself from lapsing back into relational poverty.



The Sabbath on the seventh day is the celebration of the holiness of God that can only be revealed in relationship. It is a symbol of relational richness.

### **Concluding Remarks**

A theology of talalasi is grounded on culture, scripture, and church living traditions such as the Trinity and Christology. It challenges the one truth ideology that now dominates the world today including the Pacific where everyone and everything is reduced to one system, one culture, one religion, and one way of doing things. A theology of talalasi speaks of a relational God who is real and concrete through Christ in the Spirit. A God who not only embraces all stories of different cultures, religions, gender, families, persons, and generations, but also one who is not comfortable with the idea of oneness and coercive unity entrenched in many of our systems. God himself through Christ in the Spirit gives us a model of talalasi or diversity and multiplicity based on the relational being of God and the church as the Tino o Keriso should be at the forefront in promoting such a model to the world.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Upolu Luma Vaai, 'Motu ma le Taula: Towards an Island Let Be Hermeneutics,' *The Pacific Journal of Theology* 53 (2015):31.

<sup>2</sup> Upolu Luma Vaai, 'Vaatapalagi: De-Heavening Trinitarian Theology in the Islands,' in *Colonial Contexts and Postcolonial Theologies: Storyweaving in the Asia-Pacific*, eds. Mark G. Brett and Jione Havea (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Lauren Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (London: Routledge, 2008), 9.

<sup>4</sup> The word empire is not just about how resources flow from the margin to the centre or how power is accumulated at the top of the hierarchy as Lee Griffiths contends. It also refers to anything to do with our thirst for greatness, power, and authority to dominate, rule, coerce, diminish, suppress, silent, or reduce everything and everyone into one. For the first point, see Lee Griffiths, *God is Subversive: Talking Peace in a Time of Empire* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), x.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the control of USA and global economic institutions on the world, see Arundhati Roy, *The Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (London: Harper, 2004), 40.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Greenspan in his report to the US House Government Oversight and Reform Committee, paraphrased by Kevin Barr, *Economic Systems and Social Justice: Corporate Greed or the Common Good* (Suva: Wailoku, 2012), 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia: Vanuatu Pilot Study Report* (Vanuatu: Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Barr, *Economic Systems and Social Justice*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Tui Atua, 'More on Meaning, Nuance and Metaphor,' in Su'esu'e Manogi: *In Search of Fragrance*, eds. Tamasailau M. Suaalii-Sauni et.al. (Lepapaigalagala: National University of Samoa, 2008), 71f.

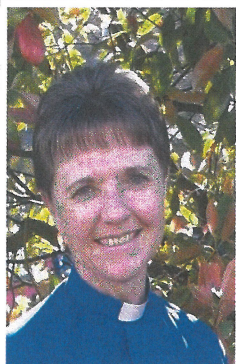
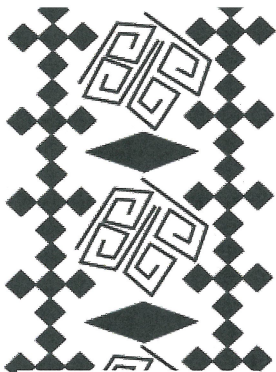
<sup>10</sup> Kallistos Ware, 'The Holy Trinity: Model for Personhood-in-Relation', in *The Trinity and an Entangled World: Relationality in Physical Science and Theology*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 107.

<sup>11</sup> John Behr, *The Nicene Faith* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 1:198.

<sup>12</sup> See Behr for more of this. Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 221f.

<sup>13</sup> Tagata is a generic term for 'person' throughout many islands of the Pacific. Tagata (Samoa), Tangata (Tonga and Maori), Kanaka (Hawaii), Tamata (Fiji), Taata (Maohi), and so forth.

- <sup>14</sup> Marion Grau, *Refiguring Theological Hermeneutics: Hermes, Trickster, Fool* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Marcia W. Mount Shoop, *Let the Bones Dance: Embodiment and the Body of Christ* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 48f.
- <sup>16</sup> John Zizioulas, 'Relational Ontology: Insights from Patristic Thought', in *The Trinity in an Entangled World*, 146.
- <sup>17</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in the Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 1985), 17.
- <sup>18</sup> Zizioulas, 'Relational Ontology,' 148ff.
- <sup>19</sup> C. S. Song, 'In the Beginning Were Stories, Not Texts,' *Theologies and Cultures* 5 (2008): 5-27, see pg. 12ff.
- <sup>20</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM, 1981), 30ff.
- <sup>21</sup> Catherine Keller, 'Be the Fish: A Theology of Creation out of Chaos,' *Word & World* 32 (2012):16.
- <sup>22</sup> Hinne Wagenaar, 'Babel, Jerusalem and Kumba: Missiological Reflections on Genesis 11:1-9 and Acts 2:1-13,' *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003):406-421, see pg. 410.
- <sup>23</sup> Wagenaar, 'Babel, Jerusalem and Kumba,' 408ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 29.



**Revd Dr Val Ogden**

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## Electronic Preachers then and now

### A British retrospective, with implications for the present-day Pacific.

What does electronic, Christian communication across the Pacific look and sound like in 2015? Who facilitates it? Who controls it? Who accesses it?

Any expectation of comprehensive answers to such questions from this article will meet with disappointment. This is not a paper presenting recent research findings: though how useful they might be. Its purpose is rather to offer some limited retrospective and reflection on the topic of electronic communication through the lens and the voice of the prominent British Methodist broadcaster/communicator Revd Dr Colin Morris.<sup>1</sup> From this reflection, key questions present: not least, 'What do Churches of the Pacific in 2015 need to heed, in order that gospel communication, through multi-media platforms, might speak to their present realities with an authentic voice?'

Let us reminisce. In 1974, the United Nations passed a resolution calling for a New World Information Order: a call that ran roughly parallel to debates on the necessity of a New International Economic Order. It was a period of high hopes for the establishment of fresh international initiatives to repair the legacies of poverty and under-development that remained from colonialism. In 1976, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appointed a committee headed by the Irish laureate Sean MacBride to consider the communications and information agendas. The charge, as precise as it was unwieldy, was to study 'the totality of communication problems in modern societies'.<sup>2</sup>

The MacBride Commission's resulting report in 1980 *Many Voices, One World* captures the debates of the day and the enormity of their reach.<sup>3</sup> According to Carlson, 'Such a document had never before seen the light of day. Nor has anything comparable in the area of media and communication been achieved since'.<sup>4</sup> Her retrospective sketches out helpfully the history of the post-Cold War period and how the Commission confronted a myriad challenges from nations in the South about the unequal distribution of communication resources, ethics and fairness in international news reporting, and the unwelcome dominance of transnational corporations in global communications.

Twelve years earlier, in 1968, communication was high on the World Council of Churches' agenda. Two early WCC initiatives; the World Committee for Christian Broadcasting, and the Churches Co-ordinating Committee for Christian Broadcasting merged to form the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).<sup>5</sup> At the WCC Uppsala Assembly of the same year, a statement on 'The Church and the Media of Mass Communication' was upbeat and optimistic about the levels of engagement it anticipated churches could have in a developing information society if they moved beyond

suspicion and embraced professionalism. But in 1983, and with the MacBride report as source material, the WCC Vancouver Assembly reflections were far less upbeat in tone, anticipating an ever widening gap between the information-poor and the information-rich.<sup>6</sup>

Having followed the work of WACC reasonably closely over the past thirty years, I remain impressed by the organisation's 1986 statement-piece *Principles of Christian Communication* which informed the work until a recent spell of strategic planning for 2012-2016 resulted in the promotion of a shorter, notably less confessional version. Originally drafted by Fr Michael Traber, the 1986 principles begin with a straightforward introduction, anchored in and explicit about WACC's motivations;

...to examine [their] communication practices and policies on the basis of the Good News of the Kingdom. The guidelines which follow are an expression of our common witness to Jesus Christ and the hope he has given us through the transforming power of his own communication.<sup>7</sup>

Section one, *Communication from a Christian Perspective* is valuable both for its simplicity and breadth. It affirms that communication from a Christian perspective, 'hearing the Good News, living by it and witnessing to it is the basic calling of all Christians'. The Holy Spirit enables this but cannot be captured or controlled by any one church or religious group. The Good News is for the whole person and all people, with the communication model of the servant Christ paramount (Philippians 2.7). Good News, when an act of Christian communication, liberates and reconciles, focusing on the Kingdom of God. The Church as God's chosen instrument is to embody and testify to the central values of that Kingdom: oneness, reconciliation, equality, justice, freedom, harmony, peace and love (shalom). Christian communicators are respectful of mystery and aware of their inadequacies. They work to release God's transforming power in all aspects of human life.

Contrast this with the opening sentence of the revised 2012 version.

## Communication is a spiritual exercise

WACC understands that communication is a function of transcendence. There is a sacredness to the creation of meaning in common, in which communication reflects the spiritual values at the heart of human identity. Creating meaning in common is a journey that Christians share with people of other faiths and none.

WACC understands that communication is a function of transcendence. There is a sacredness to the creation of meaning in common, in which communication reflects the spiritual values at the heart of human identity. Creating meaning in common is a journey that Christians share with people of other faiths and none.

WACC finds in the person of Jesus a model for communication. In Jesus, God became one with humankind and experienced the marvelous intensity of human relationships. In Jesus, God became part of human history and affirmed the essential value of community and culture. Jesus lived out compassion for the poor, the sick and the excluded, and he challenged the powerful to serve those in need. In Jesus, God experienced the brokenness and pain produced by injustice. In Jesus, God lifted up the hope of healing and fulfilment, of abundant life for all.

The Christian tradition has no monopoly on such values; they are common to all faiths. By means of this document, WACC seeks to encourage inter-faith study and dialogue.<sup>8</sup>

It is transparently different territory. Here now is the language of spirituality, attention to the person and model of Jesus rather than a commission to be his witnesses, and the declaration of communication values held in common with all other faiths. Good News, Kingdom, calling, witness, praise, testify: all these terms have disappeared. WACC's strategic plan explains the reasoning.<sup>9</sup> This paper is respectful of this and does not attempt to engage critically with the debates here.

The attention I have given to McBride and WACC is necessary to preface the presentation and analysis now given to one confessional Christian communicator and broadcast practitioner who spoke into and out of the captivating context in the 1980s. The Revd Dr Colin Morris, a Methodist missionary who had been a key figure in Northern Rhodesia-Zambia's independence struggle, became one of the United Kingdom's most noted religious broadcasters in the 1970s – 1990s and for some years was Head of Religious Broadcasting for the BBC. In 1984, he published *God in a Box* and a BBC documentary by the same name.<sup>10</sup> Together they comprise material which can be summarised in four areas. They explore the phenomenon of the then 'new' global electronic age and offer insight through the lens of Christian theology. They show us the communicator Morris as writer and broadcaster dealing in words and visuals around the same topic. They home in on and grapple with a critical aspect of the electronic age in the 1980s which sorely challenged the British churches, namely the phenomenon of televised preaching out of the United States beamed to the world. And fourthly, they spotlight Morris, confessional Christian, Methodist minister, as analyst, interviewer and commentator aiming to interpret these matters for 'ordinary' viewers and readers, and for the British Churches. I contend that Morris's work in the 1980s has direct relevance for Pacific Christians today who are often recipients of that early electronic Church legacy – for better or worse.



Morris particularly enjoys using two terms, 'electronic Church' and 'electronic Babel' as shorthand to describe the explosion of global, televised, preaching, worship and evangelism via satellite and cable that had its inception in North America in the 1980s. His *God in a Box* paperback and documentary are fine contributions to a vast body of literature and analysis that the phenomenon generated. One of the most helpful features of both are the probing interviews Morris did with the early electronic evangelists. He wanted to hold to account Christian leaders in the media spotlight who had the potential to reach millions. His soundings and findings have considerable resonance for the Pacific region today as homes are filled with preaching and apologetics from multiple voices and sources, frequently not Pacific generated.

Morris opens his 1984 BBC documentary by calling the American superstar evangelists the 'new breed of missionaries,' and investigates the operations of five of them; Rex Humbard, Ernest Angely, Robert Schuller, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. This paper looks only at Humbard, Angely and Robertson. What they hold in common for Morris is that they have all chosen to 'buy time and sell God' by embracing with alacrity, a new era in communications. He predicts, speaking in 1984, that the expressions of electronic evangelism he is exposing may become part of British homes within a year or two: not through public service broadcasting, but through buying time on cable and satellite. His base question is therefore, what implications will these media have for the message of Christianity? What kind of gospel is already being communicated, and could be prevalent in Britain before long? Morris's journalistic enquiry never resorts to easy stereotype. He listens astutely to the tele-evangelists, questions penetratingly, and probes their different motivations and mission strategies firmly yet without showmanship. Stones are not left unturned.

He first interviews Rex Humbard, whose whole family, beautifully attired and ever smiling, shared his television ministry. He is questioned by Morris about the ambition he has for the ministry's future in the electronic age. Humbard recalls the original prompting of God in his heart having watched the animated, engrossed faces of people gathered around a shop window television set while watching a ball game. That moment convinced him that he had to evangelise the whole world through new electronic media. He related this calling to his father who would have none of it, but remained convinced it was his life's work, as he shares with Morris in the interview.

CM: Do you think that's a good thing?

RH: Pardon?

CM: Do you think it's a good thing? That the first thing they should have is a television set?

RH: Well, it's the only way they will ever reach the outside world, and in primitive areas of Africa I have seen these transmitters – what they call satellite transmitters – and I have seen the social centres the Governments build and put the TV set in there, battery set. I have seen those people come. They're still primitive like always out of their grass huts – go in and take the chairs out so more can stand – stand in front of that talking box, and literally weep as they listen to the message of love, and Christ – and then they go back to those huts. It used to take missionaries eight months to get back up in there, up the Amazon. Today I can go in there every week.

Morris then speaks to Humbard's public relations officer, Jim Daly. He suggests to him that the Humbards are part of a massive, growing religious communications industry. Surely industries must either expand or die, yet tele-evangelists are saturating the market already so where is the room for further expansion? Daly agrees that further expansion in

the United States is not possible which is why the overseas market must be captured. Increased viewers means increased dollars means increased monies available to expand. Without this, he admits, the Rex Humbard Foundation would struggle to survive. They continue;

CM: Do you ever have a sense, Jim, that what you're doing in this complex marketing operation is really a thousand miles away from the spirit of Jesus?

JD: Oh no, not at all! In fact if you look into the Scriptures you'll find that Jesus talked about money almost more than he talked on any other subject. In fact he talked about giving stewards talents, which were in essence money. And he said, 'Take these five talents and go out and make something with them.' And I think he expects us to use money wisely, efficiently for the Kingdom of God.

Morris's carefully crafted questions, interjected at the opportune moment, raise the big issues; globalisation and technology, wealth, power and responsibility, evangelisation and contextualisation, even the person and legacy of Jesus. Does electronic evangelism rightly capture and convey his Spirit? They are not just big questions, they are skilfully mission-shaped by Morris, a confessional, professional Christian communicator.

Morris spent sixteen years as a missionary contextually immersed in Africa, much engaged in human communication 'in the flesh', at the grass roots, politically and pastorally. He sits opposite Humbard, missionary by satellite, who believes that he enters weekly into people's homes as an equal if not more effective communicator of the Gospel. Humbard has come to this conclusion by watching the emotional reaction on the faces of the economically poor, as the message of Christ is broadcast. But can Christian communication for the purposes of God's mission be satisfactory and authentic if it is only ever love expressed at a distance? When television evangelists

purport to speak for God and touch the hearts of humanity from the comfort and safety of a studio, Morris is keen to hold up the image of wrestling Jacob to the camera, not least because it speaks of the paradox of power. When Jacob prevails, it is at his point of greatest weakness. And turning to the New Testament,

In just the same way, the Christian Gospel made its original appeal from earthly weakness to earthly strength; it was preached from the cross to the principalities and powers. This is a reversal of the dynamics of mass communication. They are dominating influences, communicating from strength to weakness, power to impotence, huge conglomerate to single human listener.

It is the notion of distance as much as reversed power dynamics which exercises Morris as a communications conundrum. Missionaries who control the mass media have the luxury of staying remote from those who watch and listen. Even the seeming intimacy of Facebook messaging and interactions with live programming thirty years on, still necessitate screen and cable. We cannot reach out and touch. Morris fears the receivers of the electronic preachers' messages may in turn internalise remoteness as a feature of the Gospel, not discovering that real transformation can only take hold if it is wrestled with and grasped.

The topic of touch segues neatly into Morris's analysis of the electronic preacher Ernest Angle. Twenty-first century technology's response to 1 John 1 must be, presumably, the touch-screen<sup>11</sup>. When using a web-based Bible concordance or other software on tablet or smartphone today humans are hands-on. We touch, expand, delete or save, personalising that which has engaged us. Touchscreens were not the stuff of 1984, but it could be argued that tele-evangelist Ernest Angle championed a kind of prototype. He believed God's healing power could be transmitted from the touch of his hand, personally, on the camera which was

transmitting his programme, and into the body of a viewer who pressed their hand to their television screen at the same moment. Angley demonstrates this proudly for Morris and recounts stories of miracles. He is clear that God's angel visited him with the command to heal through television, and says in the interview,

'One day I was standing before the cameras right here in the Cathedral, and the Lord said, "Stretch forth your hand and tell the people to put their hand against yours and I will heal them." And he said, "This is a form of laying on of hands.'

Then, during a broadcast Angley stands directly facing camera with the flat of his hand outstretched and intones, almost like a chant,

'So put your hand against mine and believe the Lord right now. If you have an afflicted child, press its sick little body against mine – countless thousands have been healed in this way in the United States and throughout the nations.'

Angley then cries loudly, 'Heal! Heal! a number of times. Morris proceeds to ask Angley a very precise question about the interplay of near and distant communication in his ministry.

CM: When you heal...

EA: I don't heal, now. Jesus heals!

CM: ..when Jesus heals through you..

EA: That's better!

CM: ...for instance here, in this Cathedral; you are laying hands on people, you are looking upon them, they are there present to you. How can you lay hands on people on the other side of a television screen?

EA: Because it shows I'm not the healer. God's everywhere. And he just uses me as an instrument. And he speaks. And His power goes through my voice. That's the reason they can't get away on television from me saying, 'Heal, heal,



heal,' – so many times – the Holy Spirit is crying that out through my voice. And nobody realises that like I do. And it's penetrating into the innermost being of people. And even sceptics so many times can't get away from it.

The communications media that Anglely acknowledges are voice, touch, his own humanity as chosen instrument of God and the power of God made present to him as angelic being or Holy Spirit. Morris never disputes the validity of these in his commentary, but disagrees with their primacy. He names electricity and money as the real powers that equip the Anglely organisation to communicate globally. He sees in Anglely a throwback to the folksy, entertaining mass preacher of America's frontier past, but with a state of the art (back in 1984) communications system. Electricity powers the telephone to give instant communication with callers requesting prayer, it drives the computers that keep track of the faithful and churn out the 'individual' appeal letters to the masses. Dr William Fore, speaking for the communications desk of the National Council of Churches in the States, offers commentary on Anglely and is scathing. He presents a God who is nothing to do with the Christian God, he opines; only a magic, miracle worker who can be switched on and off at will, if viewers play Anglely's game. It is no less than blasphemous he concludes.

I am interested in Morris's own summary of Anglely, or at least the one he chooses to communicate for the purposes of this documentary. Unlike Fore, it makes no theological statement, only a pastoral one. It's fatally easy to mock men like Ernest Anglely, especially if you're young and healthy and there seem to be endlessly sunny days ahead. But if you're old, or the doctors shake their heads sadly over you, then you don't sneer at Ernest Anglely. You may even find yourself pressing your hand to that television screen.

I hear the compassionate tone too in Pullum's analysis.<sup>12</sup> He reflects on Anglely offering the needy a 'point of contact,' either through hand-

laying on the television set, or by sending a donation to receive a blessed cloth. The Biblical precedent that Anglely cites for this is Acts 9.11-12 where the Apostle Paul had anointed cloths with miracle power. He emphasises that the cloths themselves did not heal, but they were a point of contact from the Apostle that people used to release their faith so that they could accept miracles.

Both Morris and Pullum, I contend, find themselves accepting that although intellectually they would conceptualise the Christian communication on offer from Anglely as remote, and brought near only artificially, courtesy of sophisticated technology, to many a viewer it is perceived as genuinely intimate. Morris reflects on the Johannine Jesus, who prays for those within his line of sight, 'I do not pray for the world but for these..' as demonstrating the intimacy of Incarnation. He is present within whispering and touching distance. Whereas, in earthed, unsophisticated, pastoral terms, a post Resurrection and Ascension Christ may be perceived as completely remote from his global family unless there are intimate points of contact for them.

Of the other tele-evangelists with whom Morris interacts, attention to Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson is most fruitful from a communications standpoint, but within the limitations of this paper, and with a Pacific readership in mind, I shall focus only Robertson. He was the last electronic evangelist featured in Morris's work, and at that time CEO of the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). Morris sees Robertson's mission as not so much in evangelical competition with other electronic preachers, but in professional competition with other television networks. Robertson's vast, global, satellite output included the recognised elements of any other popular network; talk shows, documentaries, soap operas, and a news service whose ethical basis Robertson vigorously promotes.

The thing that our research has shown is that people in the United States are hungry, there's always an insatiable appetite for news and information. But the news they're receiving on secular television is disjointed, without meaning, there's no causation in it to speak of. People would like to know why things are happening, what is the meaning of these things... and I believe that this is what we're trying to do is give some meaning to the news, and also to give a Scriptural, biblical interpretation of some of the events in the world today. We're finding an audience rather interested in that.

Morris does not really challenge Robertson about the news slant, but does about the gospel of success, security and affluence that he hears as dominant in electronic evangelism. He asks where the hard words of the Gospel are; laying down of life or taking up of cross. After some personal reminiscences about facing hard challenges, Robertson is refreshingly frank about the compromised communication task that faces him.

I don't hesitate to talk about these things, and yet it is difficult to communicate the full orb truth of the Gospel in five minute segments, and television is a five minute medium. You can't go on too long, if you do people grow bored and tune off. Whether we're dealing in China or whether we're dealing in South America, the people want something that's fast paced and quick and it's very, very hard to explain some of the commitment it takes to be a disciple of Jesus in the short time given to you.

Morris develops the questions around prosperity themes and assumptions about style and pace to raise questions about Americanisation. He visits CBN's University, specialising in communications and journalism education combined with conservative Biblical studies. Its vision is to offer education by electronic extension, even to remote communities,



and in a segment reminiscent of the conversation Morris had with Rex Humbard about grassroots television access, Morris hears the University's Principal Dr Richard Gottier envision that affordable satellite reception is rapidly becoming a reality for the poor.

CM: But culturally, aren't you in the business of Americanising the world?

RG: I suppose there's always that danger, but if you're going to make available what we know, we're probably going to teach it through our eyes, and I suppose there is the possibility that will happen. There's also the possibility of raising the question, without this technology, the education may not happen.

Then to Robertson again.

CM: I find those satellite dishes of yours very scary, because of this American gospel being beamed to the peoples of Africa, and Asia and India and so on. Aren't you really going to blow their culture sky high?

PR: I think their culture's already been blown apart by Hollywood, and by the BBC, and by other major programme producers. I think there's a homogenisation – I don't think it's a healthy trend at all – but I think it's happening, and it's going to happen whether religious people are involved in it or not.

CM: But don't you sometimes think, Pat, all this equipment, all this technology, all these magnificent buildings are a million miles away from the spirit of Jesus who had nowhere to lay his head?

PR: To be a significant factor in communications today we need the tools of modern communications and I believe that he's helped us get them. But I think about it quite frequently. He came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, and he was the King of kings and Lord of lords and it is

quite a contrast, and I haven't gotten the answer to it. I wish I did.

Morris, whilst admiring the technological wizardry of CBN's university by satellite in 1984, certainly voices his concern about the invasive, potentially culture-destroying advance of Americanisation through it. Even in Northern Rhodesia c 1955, as is shown through his unpublished papers, Morris is consistent in urging Christian educators and communicators to avoid entrapment into the mental identity of 'second-hand society'. Such a society, he claims, is fed uncritically by ideology from elsewhere and absorbs it because it has surface appeal, feeds notions of easy pleasure and prosperity, or simply because it dominates the readily available communication channels into one's own home.

Assuming you are a Pacific reader of this paper, it is, I hope, permissible to ask as this paper concludes, 'Which preachers and ideologies now dominate the readily available communication channels into your home, or that of your family and church members in 2015?' Is it TBN (Trinity Broadcast Network), carried on over seventy international satellites? Or do personalities such as Joyce Meyer or Brian Houston, regularly on the Sky Pacific schedules, preach, teach and stream into your living room? Morris's critical survey of the electronic preachers of the 1980s wrestled with some pressing and pertinent issues about global Christian communications in the early days before its extraordinary explosion into our lives. Since then, technologies have advanced beyond all recognition. I doubt that our theological and ecumenical responses have kept pace

## Notes

<sup>2</sup>James A. Wollert, 'Many Voices, One World (Book)', Journalism Quarterly, 58 (1981), 123-123. <<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=15115603&site=ehost-live&scope=site>>

<sup>3</sup> <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000400/040066eb.pdf>> [Accessed 18 October 2015].

<sup>4</sup>Ulla Carlson, 'The MacBride Report in the Rear-view Mirror', QUA-DERNS (2005): 1967.

<[http://www.cac.cat/pfw\\_files/cma/recerca/quaderns\\_cac/Q21\\_EN.pdf#page=60](http://www.cac.cat/pfw_files/cma/recerca/quaderns_cac/Q21_EN.pdf#page=60)> [Accessed 14 October 2015].

<sup>5</sup> A basic timeline is at <<http://www.waccglobal.org/who-we-are/our-history/timeline>> [Accessed 3 January

2014] but this does not reference – and it should – the noteworthy WACC affiliation with the Centre for the

Study of Communication and Culture, a Jesuit foundation, which Morris appreciates in the preface to his 1984

God in a Box. For this see <<http://csc.scu.edu/CSCC/history.html>> and the essential Communications Research

Trends magazine archive dating from 1979. P. Lee, The World Association for Christian Communication 1975-

2000, a labour of love (London: WACC, 2000) is a useful summary text.

<sup>6</sup>See Stephen Brown's excellent summary of this period; 'Changing paradigms of ecumenical communication', in Media Development (Toronto: WACC) VOL LIX 1/2012, p33-37.

<[http://cdn.agilitycms.com/waccglobal/images/galleries/resources/md/md\\_](http://cdn.agilitycms.com/waccglobal/images/galleries/resources/md/md_archives_covers/md_pdfs/md-)

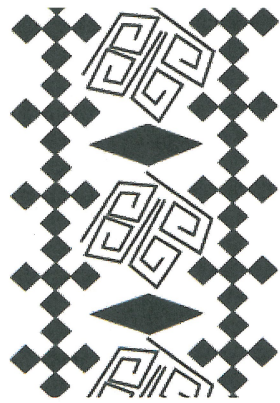
2012-1.pdf> [Accessed 3 January 2013]. Also Kathy Lowe, Opening Eyes and Ears (Geneva: WCC, 1983) for a practical source text which gathers many actual examples of then current grassroots communication initiatives and their related challenges from around the globe: the living narratives which can so easily lose their voice amidst the verbosity of official, ecumenical texts.

<sup>7</sup> The text of the 1986 principles is accessible as Appendix III in Information made Intimate. See note 1 above.

<sup>8</sup><http://cdn.agilitycms.com/wacc-global/Communication-for-All.pdf> [Accessed 18 October 2015]

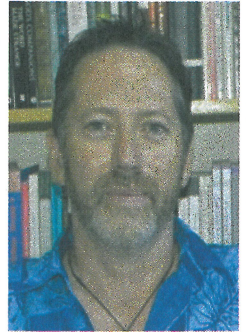
<sup>9</sup><http://www.waccglobal.org/who-we-are/our-organization/strategic-plan> [Accessed 18 October 2015].

- <sup>10</sup> Colin Morris, *God-in-a-box: Christian Strategy in the Television Age*. (1984: Hodder and Stoughton) <sup>11</sup> We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. 1 John.1 (NRSV)
- <sup>12</sup> Stephen J. Pullum, 'His Speech Betrayeth Him: The Healing of Ernest Angley', *Journal of Communication & Religion*, 14 (1991), 44-56.



## The Rainbow Covenant, Climate Change, and Noah's Exile

*Based on a sermon preached at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Suva, Fiji Islands on the First Sunday in Lent, 22 February 2015.*



**Dr. Richard A. Davis**

Genesis 9:8–17 is the source of what is known as the Rainbow Covenant (better known as the Noahic Covenant), the covenant God makes with Noah, his descendants, and all living flesh. It is a well-known part of the larger Noah narrative (Genesis 5–9), in which God floods the world wiping out sinful humanity and gives life on Earth a fresh start.

One promise God makes in this Covenant is that God will never again flood the earth. The NRSV translates the Hebrew as: “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Genesis 9:11).<sup>1</sup>

God's promise has taken on new significance with the threat of sea-level rise, one of the many anticipated effects of climate change that threatens low-lying Pacific settlements and entire islands. Countries such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and

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the Marshall Islands are especially vulnerable to sea-level rise, but also at risk are low-lying areas of many other Pacific nations, including Fiji.

Coming toward the end of the Noah story, this particular passage from Genesis (9:8–17) is a very repetitive piece of scripture. Several times in just a few verses, God repeats the words of covenant making, but with a slight variation each time. When we see repetition, we may think that we are reading a bad writer or editor, but let us give the author of Genesis the benefit of the doubt and assume instead that God wants us to learn and never forget the point here. Repetition provides emphasis and reinforcement to a humanity that is perhaps slow to learn. Alternatively, perhaps God wants to reassure Noah and his family about his change of attitude and behaviour. He will never again destroy the earth by flood.

It is significant that when God asked Noah to build the ark he spoke to Noah alone (Genesis 6:13–21), but here God, in making the Covenant (Genesis 9:8–16) makes sure that he speaks to Noah and his sons. Noah and his family had just seen everything they knew wiped off the face of the earth, so God was at pains to reassure them all directly that he would not do it again.

The lesson is clear enough; God will never again destroy the whole earth. God makes the Rainbow Covenant with Noah's family, his descendants, every creature who was in the Ark, and the whole Earth. God wants this point to sink home. And it is one we must remember too, in all its aspects.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Pacific Islanders believe that because of this Covenant it is impossible that God will allow climate change to cause water to inundate low-lying areas or countries. But does this Covenant really prevent flooding and sea level rise? Sadly, those who believe this are mistaken. This covenant does not prevent natural disasters and floods. It did not prevent the 1931 Central China floods that claimed close to 4 million lives. Nearer to home, and more recently, it did not prevent the Fiji floods of 2009 that claimed at least 16 lives. God's covenant with Noah will not prevent flooding and sea level rise due to climate change either.

Evil remains with us, but through the covenant we can be sure that natural disasters are not the products of God's anger or rejection. In many cases, disasters have very human causes. In the case of sea level rise caused by climate change, the scientific consensus is that greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, leading to global warming. We are all aware that Western politicians debate resolutions at big international conferences while increasing their emissions at home, and protecting and subsidizing oil and coal industries. Meanwhile, Pacific authorities are already relocating some communities to higher ground.

For people tied so closely to the land and sea where their ancestors lived, I can only imagine the disruption caused to these communities – not only to the communities, but also in the hearts and minds of those affected. We should never underestimate human attachment to a place, especially those who have not much else but the land they farm, which has provided for them and their communities over countless generations. The rising waters causing this harm are not coming from God's hand, but through anthropogenic climate change that is the result of human sin.

With the exception of Noah's family, sinful humanity was wiped out due to its sin. In this Covenant with Noah, God promises that he will no longer send waters of destruction. This does not mean that Noah's family and their descendants eradicated sin. What it means is that God will no longer punish sin in this way.

Nevertheless, it is sin that leads to climate change. Capitalist greed, originally and primarily of the West but now extending its tentacles over the whole globe, with its continued and ever more aggressive violations of mother Earth is what lies behind climate change. The curious thing here is that the unintended result of climate change was just that – unintended. No one desired to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to change the climate. That would be a grievous sin. No, the sins that eventually lead to climate change find root in greed, pride, and gluttony. These sins have begun to be the driving force of an inhumane global economy that threatens us with ecological destruction.

In some ways, because humanity is implicated in the causes of climate change,



it deserves the punishment of a worldwide flood. We have sown the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). Some have more emissions than others do, but all peoples have emissions and many of us use beyond what is acceptable for a stable climate. We must all do our bit to reduce emissions.

However, we must keep in mind that in our text from Genesis, God makes humanity a promise. God promises never to flood the whole earth and destroy all flesh again. Humans make promises too. But when God makes a promise to us, we should remember all the promises God has made and fulfils on a daily basis to us. God's promise in our story today is that God will not allow the forces of chaos to destroy us. Other promises of God include that found in Jeremiah 29:11: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."

However, these promises may have a hollow sound to those facing dislocation through climate change induced sea level rise. Those faced with losing their lands and ancestral homes in the Pacific may be our families and friends, and they are certainly our brothers and sisters in Christ.

But sea level rise is not a flood to destroy the whole earth and all flesh. To think that the flooding of our land is a flood for the whole earth is somewhat self-centred. In itself, such a view demonstrates a sinful egoism that somehow our world is the whole world. That somehow if our world is destroyed, the whole world is destroyed. This is not how we should think at all.

Those displaced by climate change may wonder what God has done in allowing this to happen. But instead of thinking about what God may have taken from us, we can choose to see what God has given us.

Perhaps people displaced by climate change can be a gift to the world-wide church. They might be able to teach the rest of us that our home is not of this earth. By that I do not mean that our home is in heaven, and that we should simply accept our fate here and wait for death. No. I mean that they can teach us how to live here and now.



Those victims of sea level rise forced to leave their homelands have been called rightly been called refugees. This appears to be a correct use of the term. However, I want to apply a different, and theological, term to their plight, and that is the term “exile”.

An exile is someone forced to leave their home for one reason or another. Using ‘exile’ instead of ‘refugee’ allows Christians to draw on our own traditions of the Bible and theology in understanding the plight of those relocated by climate change. They will move, like all exiles, to a strange place and encounter the unfamiliar.

But they are not the only exiles in the church. Pacific peoples faced a greater disruption with the arrival of missionaries and colonization. And in the secularizing West, Christians today, without moving at all, face being exiles in a rapidly changing culture which has increasingly little place for faith. All exiles can help one another deal with the unfamiliar, whether in new places or in rapidly changing cultures.

Many of those dislocated by rising sea levels will find themselves in exile. However, unlike the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon, there will be little chance of a return home. They will need to learn how to sing their songs in a new land, permanently. For them the question is: “How do we learn to be resident aliens, living in exile?” This is not a question restricted to today’s Christians, this has been a question for the earliest Christians.

In the “Epistle to Diognetus”, early Christians were reported on in the following way:

*They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.<sup>2</sup>*

Christians were seen in a way that transcended boundaries with a light connection to place. Scripture supports this perspective too. Consider these verses that encourage the view that we are to cling lightly to the

world, upon which we are merely sojourners:

Hebrews 13:14: “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.”

Philippians 3:20: “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Ephesians 2:19: “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God”

And in 1 Peter 1:1, Peter addresses “the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Then there are other verses that make mention of the destruction and despoliation of the earth:

2 Corinthians 5:1, 8: “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

All of Micah 2 is worth reading as it links the covetousness of the greedy with the despoliation of the Earth. The result being that the sin of the few makes the land uninhabitable (Micah 2:10):

Arise and go;  
for this is no place to rest,  
because of uncleanness that destroys  
with a grievous destruction.

Returning to Noah, we see that he too was an exile. For Noah there was no chance of returning home in the ark. His homeland was flooded and his remaining worldly possessions were in the ark. Most likely, he and his family had drifted a long way from home. He had to accept his new location as provided by God.

The first thing that Noah did upon exiting the ark was to worship God

by offering burnt-offerings (8:20). Noah then demonstrates his acceptance of his new home by immediately planting a grape vine (9:20). Given that grapevines can take about three years to produce their first fruit, we can see that Noah took a long-term view in adopting his new home.

In these small ways that others, one thing that the Creation narrative of the first 11 chapters of Genesis makes clear is that our God, the God of Noah, is the God of the whole world. God not only made the world, but also is everywhere present in it. God was with Noah when he sets off in the ark and was there when the ark came to rest. Few gods of the ancient world could have achieved that feat, often inhabiting just one place. While the gods of the Ancient Near East were often parochial, local gods, the God of Noah was the creator and God of the whole Earth. Climate change forces us to rethink our God. God is not the god of our village or the god of our atoll. God is the one true God of the whole world. Wherever we are and wherever we go, God will be with us in exile.

As we disappear into unknown exiles, we do not take God with us on our journey. Rather God takes us on his. Moses for example, in exile through the desert, allowed God to lead him and the Hebrew people to new places. It took time, but God was always with them.

As exiles clinging lightly to this world we are like ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) or shining stars of light in the world (Philippians 2:15). Can Pacific peoples take a Christianity with them into exile lives in harmony with God, neighbour, and creation?

Can we nurture the faith of an exile – with eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God that has no regard for arbitrary national borders? Can we demonstrate a new way of living – clinging lightly to this earth and the things of this world? I hope we can.



An exilic theology of climate change also poses a responsibility on those receiving the exiles. Take Deuteronomy 10:19: “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (see also Job 29:16). Sadly, many governments around the world are treating refugees, asylum seekers, and exiles terribly (Psalm 94:6: “They kill the widow and the stranger, they murder the orphan”). We Christians need to open our hearts and encourage governments to do better in welcoming the stranger (Matthew 25:35; Hebrews 13:2). Just as carbon emissions are no respecter of our artificial state borders, the brotherhood and sisterhood of Christians should also transcend borders.

In this global climate, Fiji is in a unique position. Some Fijian villages in low-lying areas are being relocated to higher ground. And Fiji is also receiving exiles from other Pacific countries, notably Tuvalu. Here in the middle of the Pacific, Fiji and other Pacific nations, are surrounded by some of the worst climate offenders in the world: USA, China, Australia, and New Zealand. What do we have to offer them? I hope that we can live a life together that shows them how people can live in harmony with nature and each other under God. This was the task given to the exile Noah, It remains our task today.

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### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>. All Bible citations are from the NRSV.

<sup>2</sup>. “The Epistle of Mathetes to Diognetus”, Chapter 5, translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1*. Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. Online at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers.0101.htm>.

## RECENT TRENDS AND RESPONSES IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION: OPTING FOR A DYNAMIC AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE



***Rev. Dr. Donald  
Samuel***

“We should not describe ourselves as Christians, but as people who are on the way to becoming Christians,” states Søren Kierkegaard, a nineteenth century philosopher.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS) guides us to do our theological education in a way that we contribute our best to the “becoming” or holistic formation of persons and communities in the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the new challenges and trends we face in our Christian life, education and ministry calls for our new and relevant responses. The following line present a glimpse on the experience of the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS) in reading and responding to the recent trends (signs) of the time, towards enabling the holistic formation of people in American Samoa and beyond today. “Culture is what holds a community together, giving a

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common framework of meaning.”<sup>3</sup>As Samoan Christians, just as our fellow Christians in the Pacific, we view Samoan culture as God’s gift that builds up the Samoan community. We realize that our ancestors (tua’a) received our culture (fa’aSamoa) from God, and in turn have entrusted to us so that we can responsibly pass it on to coming generations. In the traditional creation story in Samoa, “God Tagaloa’s first council was used as the model for “fono” (village council). This model is still regarded as the source of authority, direction and unity in the villages of Samoa.”<sup>4</sup> This view on the origin of culture has paved a dynamic theological basis in Samoa for a meaningful participation of God and people (Samoans) in culture. This in turn creates an awareness within us (Samoan Christians) on our God-given potentials to nurture our identity, solidarity, direction and base from which we can move on to our future.

Nevertheless, during my recent teaching ministry through the Kanana Fou Theological Seminary of the CCCAS, I have respectfully noted the observation of the students saying, “There is a trend of divinizing ministers in the church just as the chiefs were traditionally divinized. This unfair converging of both culture and church is a challenge for the church of Samoa. “Traditionally, the chiefs (matai) in Samoa were seen as divine; they were praised as elected by God to rule a family or village. Historical songs promoted such a view of the chiefs.<sup>5</sup> Since the Good news of God’s Reign was introduced by the Christian missionaries in the Southern hemisphere, in particular in the Samoan Islands, the status and authority of Christian ministers (faife’au) have been credited to that of the traditional matai. The ministers live in the big house in the village and served with food and other material/financial needs. Today, there are ministers who consciously or unconsciously claim divine status to themselves; there are Christians who tend to acclaim divine position to their ministers. As Tuivanu depicts in his research work, the service (tautua) provided to ministers is considered as part of fulfilling requirements of getting to heaven or receiving heavenly reward:

*“In reality, the matai as the family and community leader is sometimes divorced from real life situations facing family members. Sitting at the top of the hierarchical tree, he /she cannot become tautua (servant) in the sense of carrying out activities such as planting, cooking, or serving meals.. Accordance of matai status to church ministers and their treatment like matai’s ...have encouraged ministers to adopt chiefly (matai) Mannerisms and act like matai’s rather than church ministers”<sup>6</sup>*

This “matai theology” promotes a hierarchical understanding of God who is remote and passive to the sufferings and injustices of the world. It makes the Samoan Christians to split and polarize their identities of being a Samoan and being a Christian, instead of nurturing it within them integrated as Samoan Christian identity. Besides, Risa Sione Ete sees that the “image of the matai can also carry with it an oppressive message of accepting the status quo, being passive to unjust corporate structures, and blindly following those who are in authority.”<sup>7</sup> Basically, this tendency to either claim or acclaim divinization and sacredness stems from a spirit of individualism, greediness and consumerism has distinctly increased over the years (which is different from the traditional faa Samoa). The narrow individualistic style of life and the unfair spirit of greed develop into lust for more. In the (indirect or direct, spiritual or material) tug of war for power and status, the hidden agendas and ulterior motives in turn contribute to the resulting conflicts between faife’au and matai.<sup>8</sup>

This recent trend challenges Samoan Christians not to let the close link of the Samoan culture to God (“divine origin”) cause a notion that fa’a Samoa as it is followed today is perfect. The popular Samoan Christian leader Kamu cautions us against such assumption. He says that,

*"Culture is created: it is purposeful, it is collective; transmitted by the people themselves and adapted, for it is through this process and the experience of living in the contextual reality, that culture is formulated, adapted, learned, adjusted and transmitted... When it is said that culture is of divine origin, it is actually meant as people see it as "basically good, it is for the good of its people, for the whole of society, and it is relevant because it has grown out of the living experience of the people..."<sup>9</sup>*

The original spirit and intention of faaSamoa was essentially good since culture (aganuu – that connotes both the nature and nurture at the same breath) in its pure, dynamism is God's gift of grace to us. But, it is in the way it is practiced (lived) that we tend to divinize it for the sake of achieving our own selfish ends. Coming from a multi-religious context in India, I concur with Kamu and reiterate here what bishop Leslie Newbigin stated recently, after his long term of ministry in South India:

*"There is good and bad in every culture and there are developments continually going on in every culture which may be either creative or destructive, either in line with the purpose of God as revealed in Christ for all human beings, or else out of that line."<sup>10</sup>*

The gospel of Christ endorses an immensely wide diversity among human cultures, but it does not endorse a total relativism of cultures. This implies that making any (one) culture divine or absolutely good may lead to the familiar error of cultural imperialism.

Having Christ as the Lord of daily life and living the Good news of Christ day by day, the students of Kanana Fou often experience and express a practical tension whereby they identify themselves both as Samoans and Christians. Being the witnesses and followers of Christ, they are open to the gracious deeds of Christ in their daily life. In turn, they ardently realize that Christ fulfills many of the



Samoan cultural elements, which are in tune with His will such as the qualities of bearing and sharing with one another, reconciliation (the rite of Ifoga) and hospitality. On the other hand, they also fear that taking Fa'aSamoa (Samoan way of doing things, as it is presented to them in Samoa today) as the only way of life makes the Samoan culture static and legalistic, at least in a subtle way. They feel it as a danger strongly today than ever before, as the Islands in the Pacific turn out to be more and more multicultural and multi- religious. They realize the urging need to review the current Fa'aSamoa and live it in the way God originally intends it to be – to experience it as the way of life (in all its fullness as expressed in Christ) for Samoans. They often talk about and reflect on the cracks and gaps between faife'au and matai today. In their view, the chief and the village council (Matai and fonofono) in particular today are at times tempted to get in the way in re-defining the role of a Christian minister (faife'au) and the church towards seeking their selfish gains. The danger of falling in this trap is that this shrinks the minister's role only to preaching. In their strongly perceived and expressed opinion, "we tend to manipulate the gospel to fit our own cultural preferences and comforts." Taming and watering down the prophetic spirit of the gospel has in fact become an order (trend) of the day among Christians across the world. The Good news of God's reign and God's justice has been conveniently tamed by the rich and the powerful to suit their comforts and greed.<sup>11</sup>

In their response to the recent trend of legalizing fa'aSamoa in its present form, the students at Kanana Fou refer to Niebuhr's unique search on the link between "Christ and Culture." They appreciate his stance, saying,

*"This is what human culture can be – a transformed human life in and to the glory of God. For man it is impossible, but all things are possible to God, who has created man, body and soul, for Himself, and sent his Son into the world that the world through him might be saved."*<sup>12</sup>

Their response is in tune with the stand taken by the Pacific Regional Consultation during July 27-29, 1987, led by the SPATS and the World Council of Churches. Sam Amirtham spells this out: "Gospel and Culture are integrally related to each other. There is no gospel except through the mediation of a particular culture. However, Gospel is not bound to any one particular culture... the gospel judges, illuminates and transforms every culture."<sup>13</sup> Reviving their prophetic call through the seasons of Advent (and Lent), some dedicated students at Kanan Fou (CCCAS) take it as a challenge to pledge towards working with the spontaneous, creative acts of the Risen Christ towards making life in all its fullness real today in Samoa and beyond.

### **Moving onward towards a Dynamic and Participatory (Christ-led) Culture...**

We may wonder how best to heal the above said repelling relationship between the chiefs (*matai*) in the village and pastors (*faife'au*). Though a *matai* in the village exercises power and authority over the people in his/her daily village affairs, a *faife'au* in the village has sound authority over his /her congregation just as that of *matai*. Theological education adds to such power and authority of *faife'au*. All in a village, even the highest *matai* refer to them with reverence as "spiritual fathers" and to their wives as "spiritual mothers." However, their privileges go along with responsibilities. If they abuse their power and privileges, the village council (*fono*) and the *matai* have the power to replace them. If the *faife'aus* sustain their pastoral and prophetic spirit and continually empower the congregations to seek God's reign and God's justice, and if the *matai's* take their leadership as God's call to fulfill God's justice and peace in their daily life situations, both *faife'aus* and *matai's* can serve as partners and team ministers in God's mission. As Apelu Tielu writes on the implications of God's kingdom for church, society and culture in "Talanoa ripples: Across Borders, Cultures, Disciplines",

*“...the two big powers in Samoa, the matai and the faife’au (feagaiga), can bring about God’s kingdom in their communities by not sitting on their powers, but by using it to empower communities. That is they have to give up their powers so the power of God’s love could reign in their lives and that of their communities.”<sup>14</sup>*

The matai and the faife’au are called to utilize their authority and leadership (eg., faife’au and matai) with a spirit of democracy. They should create and sustain openings for relevant checks and balances, in organizing people to seek God’s reign and God’s justice. Others refer to this as “top down approach” in building a just community.

However, by the act of “giving up their powers and accepting the reigning power of God’s love and justice,” Apelu Tielu may imply that faife’au and matai should share their power with people who feel powerless and pushed to the culture of silence (for instance, the untitled men, women and children who do not question but obey the authority such as faife’au and matai, and depend on them). As leaders, faife’au and matai should thus encourage (conscientize) those people at the grass-root level to take initiative and responsibility, towards living the Good news and the values of God’s reign as expressed in Jesus Christ. The leaders should serve as enablers and facilitators; they should empower people and motivate them to express their views towards taking collective stance and just decisions at their homes, churches and villages. Others may name this as “bottom-up approach,” in seeking God’s reign and its justice. However, there may not be a real top (North) or bottom (South) in our compass. What matters is living the Good news of God’s reign and working with God day by day for social and personal transformation, towards bringing life filled with God’s justice and peace to the whole of God’s creation. In this way of living, we may build partnership with others at our homes, neighborhoods and villages, despite their cultural and any other differences, and empower one another

mutually towards bringing life in all its fullness (“side-to-side approach”).

Above all, we as faife’au, matai, church (lotu) and village (nu’u) are called to attempt an “inside-out approach” that stems from our intimate tie with God, seeking transformative power to all our ends as well as means. This implies nurturing the habits of integrating the links between our motifs, thoughts, words and deeds, and in turn lining ourselves with others within our culture and among our neighboring cultures. All these must be checked and balanced against our dream of realizing God’s reign among us today. Our collective task is to help one another to build a sense of purpose and power, and in turn use that power to create and sustain conditions that allow us all in our communities to live fulfilling lives. Indeed, when one is in Christ, s/he becomes a new creation – a new creation or a new Garden of Eden in God’s love (agape) springs from them. It causes a kind of ripple effect within and through us – the spirit of newness and the power of transformation fill us, and overflows reaching out to our homes, neighborhoods, villages, nation and the world at large.<sup>15</sup> The question is: are we enthusiastic to receive and share this dynamic and participatory Christ-led culture wholeheartedly? Or, are we afraid that the ripple effect of the fermenting reign of God would affect and cause change in the way we use /abuse our power and authority as Christians (especially faife’au and matai) today?

The trend of divinizing culture and losing its dynamism is evident as Samoan Christians outside as well as within American Samoa co-exist with people of diverse cultures today. Hence, adapting to people of other cultures become inevitable in any context in the Pacific today. Yet, as Samoan Christians, we know that Samoan way of life (FaaSamoa) emerges from our culture. Preserving and passing on our culture as God’s gift in the way God intends it to be is still our vocation. warrants us to continue our quest of making more appropriate response to the emerging static and legalistic trends in the currently expressed Fa’aSamoa. According to Prasad, when diverse cultures come into contact,

either the stronger culture destroys the weaker, or they remain separate and segregated. On the other hand, some cultures may choose to either assimilate (partake in the beliefs, social institutions etc of the dominant culture) or they integrate with other neighboring cultures around by influencing and learning from each other. Prasad concludes by recommending the integrating response among neighboring cultures as the appropriate one, because “as the sharing continues, there is respect for all the cultures, and willingness for people of all the cultures to be part of each other’s culture.” The leading questions in this quest for a just community living may include:

*In what ways can we initiate and promote dialogue among people of diverse yet neighboring cultures today? What could be the objectives of such a dialogue? In what ways can we as people of diverse cultures live the Good news together in our daily life- situations today – what are the challenges, and what could be the (new) possibilities?...*

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## Notes

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*Rev. James  
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## Mapping the Lako Yani Vou of the Methodist Church in Fiji

The last few years have seen a major paradigm shift in the ecclesiology of the Methodist Church in Fiji. In the midst of oppression by Fiji's military-backed regime from 2009 to 2013, leaders of the Church sought to pray, reflect and discern God's will for the "Lotu Wesele". In the process, they re-envisioned their community of faith. What came out of this period of oppression and contemplation was a renewed church, with a renewed ecclesiology for the people called Methodists in Fiji. The renewed church was to be a missional, inclusive pilgrim church. The leaders coined the term "Na Lako Yani Vou" to describe the new journey that the church was embarking on – The New Exodus.

In his address to the 56 Divisional Superintendents of the Methodist Church in Fiji in March of this year, Church President, Rev. Dr. Tevita Nawadra

Banivanua, shared his perspective on this initial journey through the wilderness of oppression:

Never in the whole history of Fiji was a time when a religious community (Methodist Church in Fiji) faced such a demoralizing and humiliating situation as in the period from year 2009 to 2013 by Government. What happened was the worst treatment any form of government in Fiji had done. The Pacific Region known for its religious tolerance had never experienced any such treatment as well. All the Methodist Church in Fiji systems of governance were strangled and shut down. All meetings from Conference, Standing Committee, Annual Divisional Meetings, Quarterly meetings, Monthly or Leaders meetings were all cancelled. But some of the Divisions especially the Indian Division were given special authorization or dispensation then by the Military government. Some Divisions, Circuits or Churches carried on as almost normal since policing of the decrees were not as widespread as was hoped to be by authorities. At that time of the Military Government, of whom a good number were Methodist, showed the strength of their muscles and guns to intimidate the helpless, unarmed church members. Senior Clergyman and laymen and other Circuit Ministers were taken up to Military Camp cells to spend nights there and as if that was not enough, they were also taken to the Police cells. After the July 17th Standing Committee the whole of the Standing Committees were taken to task and charged with being “Disobedient” or something. This started with an initial nine (9) who went to tell the Gone Marama Bale the Roko Tui Dreketi that according to the Methodist Church; the Rewa Conference (2009) was still on. The second groups were the President, former Presidents and General Secretary. The third group

was the rest of the Standing Committee members (27 altogether). The whole group appeared about more than ten (10) times at the court house on various occasions until a year later the DPP office gave a “Nolle Prosequi” to the magistrate for the release of twenty three(23) leaving the four in, the then President, General Secretary and two former Church Presidents until now (six years – 2009 – 2015) with all bail conditions still hanging on.

Banivanua asked the question, “Why did God allow this to happen to a church that God had called to bring Christianity to this land in 1835?” He believes that the same situation, faced by Israelites in the Exodus and after the Exile, was faced by the Methodist Church in Fiji and that “the time has come to do some re-ordering of Society and help people called Methodist in Fiji to renew, re-create, re-invent and re-build, God’s Church.”

The exercise of reshaping the Lotu Wesele resulted in a new articulation of the Church’s vision which focussed on “the actualization of the Kingdom of God in Fiji through the uniting and renewing of all things – material and spiritual, in Christ(Ephesians 1: 10).” A corresponding mission acknowledged “our common bondage to sin but we are liberated from it through Christ’s exodus in His death and resurrection. We are, therefore, called to study carefully and sent out to proclaim clearly this good news in the name of God, following the way of Christ through the Power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28: 18 – 20).”

Key to this reshaping of the Church was the development of 12 Pillars, which form the core, the hulls so to speak, of the new drua of the Methodist Church. These pillars are:

- Pillar One: Salvation of People
- Pillar Two: The Family
- Pillar Three: Education
- Pillar Four: Constant Nurturing of the People’s Faith





- Pillar Five: Renewal of Worship & Stewardship
- Pillar Six: City Mission & Social Services
- Pillar Seven: Constant In-Service Training of Our Church Workers
- Pillar Eight: Preparation of Our Future Church Leaders
- Pillar Nine: Evangelisation of the Non-Christian Segment Of Our Society Pillar Ten: Inter-Church and Inter-Faith Relationships
- Pillar Eleven: Development of Our Church Property (Land & Building)
- Pillar Twelve: Christian Stewardship and Other Creations (Responsible Stewards of God's Creation)

The Late Rev. Dr. Tuikilakila Waqairatu, after being inducted as the President of the Church in August 2013, said that his vision for the Methodist Church in Fiji is “one that encapsulates heart of Christ’s Vision and Mission as expressed in the pillars of its Connexional Plan,” then currently being developed.

According to Waqairatu, the Methodist Church needs to focus on being:

- A soul saving church with the goal (destiny) that all may inherit Eternal Life. (John 3: 16, Luke 19: 10);
- A church that prepares, empowers and enriches its family life in every way and in all levels possible;
- A church that contributes towards quality education for our children from Kindergarten – tertiary level and the continuous education (training) in order to assist growth, maturity, assurance and witness against the context of our permissive pluralistic society;
- A church that is faithful and constant in its engagement in worship and stewardship renewal. Exploring new forms of worship pertinent or appealing to young generation but biblically based will be the guiding principle in the process. However, traditional forms of worship will still be significant as cultural

images, values and practice are still strong among many Fijians;

- A church that is faithful and constant in practising compassion through a liberating mission to the landless, the poor, the marginalized, the minorities and those who are oppressed and exploited, the deprived, the sexually abused, depressed and those who have lost their self-esteem;
- A church that is committed and open to dialogue with other Christian Churches, living faiths, government, all ethnic groups, the vanua and civil society as a way of moving the nation forward in the course of healthy nation-building.
- A church that is committed to the development of its property (land and building and other assets) in order to generate more revenue to the church to fund her mission.
- A church that cares to provide responsible stewardship to God's creation. Our self-centred human development had brought demise to the world of creation to which we are first called to be responsible for at the time of creation (Gen 1: 26a)

While the 12 Pillars signify a paradigm shift in the Methodist Church's ecclesiology and *missio-dei*, major institutional changes heralded by the New Exodus/LakoYani Vou were the review of the Church's constitution and regulations; development of a Code of Conduct for the Church and the development of a Connexional Plan (strategic plan) to help guide the community of faith.

From 2013, a much needed review of the constitution was undertaken. This was important as the previous review, in 2000, was incomplete. There had been confusion with some using the 2000 constitution, while some still used the 1984 constitution.

According to Banivanua, the attempt to review and renew the constitution, "came at the right juncture, the right time, as we have the opportunity to make our constitution much more in the spirit of the

direction of the way forward after the difficult times we have had.” “It was a way for us to see what the essence of our church was, and what were the regulations and policies that can change as the church grows, develops and adapts to our time rather than remaining rigid. So there are little changes that have been put in the constitution to enable the church to see itself that is going through a time of renewal.”

One example of this change is the recognition of the ordained status of Deaconesses. Previously, the Deaconess Order was viewed as a lower level of ministry even though they are ordained along with ministers. This has often led to deaconesses being seen as “less than” clergy. The new revised constitution which comes into effect on the 1st of January, 2016 gives equal status to ordained clergy and deaconesses. One effect of this is that Deaconesses will now be included in ministerial sessions of Church meetings.

The introduction of a Code of Conduct will provide clear guidelines to the behaviour expected of their ministers, deaconesses and leaders for effective ministry for the people of God and for the protection and wellbeing of those they serve. The Code will apply to ministers, deaconesses as well as Lay members of Leaders Meetings, lay members who are appointed or elected by the Conference to an office, a Board and/or a Committee and lay employees of the Conference offices who have responsibility for management and/or supervision of other staff.

In a statement to the media earlier this year, Methodist Church General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Epineri Vakadewavosa said that there are a number of key ethical concepts highlighted by the Code of Conduct which were part of the Church’s responsibility to make its community of faith a “safe space”, “to do all we can to make all our places, our worship, our meetings, our homes, our fellowship gatherings and all our church activities places of safety and free from abuse.”

“These are: The ministry relationship (na veiwekani vakalotu), power (na kaukauwa), boundaries in ministry (na lawa ni veiqaravi e na lotu), personal relationships (na veiwekani), justice-making (na cakacakataki ni lewa dodonu), and forgiveness (na veivosoti).”

The code of conduct covers:

1. Ministry commitment and leadership (na dina kei na veiliutaki e na lotu)
2. Relationships with colleagues (na veiwekani kei ira nai to kani vakacakacaka)
3. Authority (na kaukauwa ni veiliutaki)
4. Pastoral care (na veiqaravi vakaivakatawa)
5. Right teaching and preaching (nai vakavuvuli kei nai vunau dodonu)
6. Confidentiality (na veimaroroi)
7. Self-control (maroroya, qarauna vinaka nai tovo ni veiqaravi)
8. Child protection (na nodra taqomaki na gone lalai)
9. Abuse of women and domestic violence (nodra vakacacani na marama kei na vakayacori ni i valavala kaukauwa ena loma ni vuvale)
10. Integrity (na dina, dodonu kei na savasava)
11. Close personal relationships (na veiwekani voleka)
12. Harassment & bullying (nai tovo kaukauwa kei na veivakatotogani)
13. Ministry support and reflection (na veivukei, vei digovi kei na veivakaukauwataki)
14. Professional skills and limits (na kila vakacakacaka kei na kena yalani)
15. Self-care (qarauna iko taumada)
16. Politics (na politiki)
17. Relationship with the law (na veiwekani kei na lawa)

18. Working within institutions, organisations, or with other professions (na cakacaka vata kei na vei-matacakacaka kei na duidui kila)

Banivanua expressed his hope that these changes will provide for the community of faith, a clear picture of what a Methodist church moving through a New Exodus will look like, saying that the “separation of the regulations and policies, as well as a code of conduct, are part and parcel of promoting a new era, a LakoYani Vou Church.”

Work on the 12 Pillars as a way forward for the Church resulted in the development of Connexional Plan. Initial leaders’ retreats, facilitated by staff of the Pacific Conference of Churches, using its Exodus Formation Series of bible studies, focused the leaders of the Church’s attention on where the Church had been, where she was and where she needed to go. This plan is biblically based and at the same time applied to the situation of the Methodist Church, of Fiji and the global context today. The Connexional plan, with its 12 Pillars, maps the Methodist Church in Fiji’s journey into a new era. Subsequent retreats and workshops, led by Meli Na cuva, a strategic planning specialist, then focussed on analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the Church in relation to the 12 pillars.

This process resulted in the identification of 8 Key Strategic Areas being formulated for departments and congregations to focus on:

1. Salvation of Souls
2. Ensure Sustainable (Development) Performance And Growth Of The Methodist Church’s Assets (Resources)
3. Environmental Stewardship – The Wise, Godly And Sustainable Use of Our Natural Resources
4. Family Counselling And Enrichment



5. Healing of the Nation Through Strengthening Relationships: Intra / Inter Church and Inter Religion (including Civil Society and Government)
6. Worship Renewal And Revival
7. Human Capital Development of the Church
8. Finance, Management and Administration

“The Connexional plan is the centre, the map of our Lako Yani Vou project. It is way to lead us to properly order our church to do its tasks in accordance with a plan – guide our work from local church to head office so that we can all work together, move together,” said Banivanua.

What is different from other strategic plans of the past by the Church is the process of consultation, awareness and implementation that instead of being a “top-down”, hierarchically implemented plan, the Connexional plan has, like the revised constitution and code of conduct, been developed through a process of consultation with the Methodist community. Drafts were presented to conference, annual meetings had the opportunity to submit their responses and proposals to the drafting committees and final drafts were circulated to the congregation again before formal endorsement in this year’s annual conference. Begun in a period of political difficulties, this process, along with the permitted annual conferences and church meetings from 2012, were perhaps the only form of democratic process taking place in Fiji at that time.

The term “Connexional Plan” also speaks to the vision of the church maintaining “connexion” and moving together in the same direction as a missional community of faith, rather than semi-autonomous districts and circuits each heading in their own direction. At the same time there is room for movement and contextualisation within the local church experience, while at the same time remaining focussed on the 12 pillars and 8 key strategic areas. The process of implementation was also different, with the plan being trialled in one rural, one semi-rural and one urban division. The



Connexional plan is also geared to connect the local church communities with the national church leadership so that programmes and policies of the church are part and parcel of the life of the community of faith.

This LakoYani Vou/New Exodus is symbolised by a new symbol or logo for the Church. Launched at the 2013 Conference, the new logo consists of a double-hulled canoe, drua, replacing the fifty-year old image of outrigger canoe, takia. The drua is sailing through large waves. The cross, originally on the sail of the takia is now at the bow of the drua. A dove, symbolising the Holy Spirit is flapping its wings, generating wind. In the background of the logo are clouds in the shape of countries on the map of the world. Banivanua described the process in developing an image that would reflect the Church's new journey:

When we were designing the new logo for the Church, we looked at symbols that would describe who we are, where we are, where we are headed and how we are going to get there. The rough waves symbolise the difficulties we went through and the winds of change facing Fiji and our community of faith. Because of these huge waves we could no longer sail a takia, we needed a bigger waqa, a stronger boat, capable of sailing the big waves. The drua could do this. The drua could take us beyond the reef of where we were and out into the world, where we need to be as a missional church. The drua was bigger, so we could take our whole community and our whole nation on this new journey. The drua was founded and led by Jesus Christ, with the cross at the front. But it is the wings of the dove that creates the winds that fills the sail of the drua. It is the Holy Spirit that leads and guides us and that energises this church, providing spiritual mana to sustain us in our Lako Yani Vou.

The newdrua of the Methodist Church is yet to sail. However, that does not mean that there is no movement and no progress being made.



A new vessel has been designed and built, the traditional navigator and captain, along with the core crew have been assigned their tasks and are making ready. The map has been marked and a new course has been charted. The manual for the core crew and deckhands has been prepared and provisioning is almost complete. The final provisioning is being made and the invitation has gone out for working passengers – an inclusive and missional community of faith to board this voyage to the Kingdom of God.

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## NOTES:

Media Releases from the Department of Communication and Overseas Mission, Methodist Church in Fiji,

Banivanua T. N., Mapping “Na LakoYani Vou”, Address by the President of the Methodist Church in Fiji at the opening of the 2015 Divisional Superintendents and Divisional Stewards’ Mini-Conference at Centenary Church, Suva – 10th March, 2015, <http://methodistfiji.blogspot.com/2015/08/mapping-na-lako-yani-vou.html>.



Banivanua T. N., The Status Of The Methodist Church In Fiji, Opening Address by the President of the Methodist Church in Fiji at the opening of the 2015 Annual Conference at Centenary Church, Suva – 24th August, 2015, <http://methodistfiji.blogspot.com/2015/10/the-status-of-methodist-church-in-fiji.html>

Methodist Church in Fiji, “Pillars and Key Strategic Areas” Working Document, 2013



## BOOK REVIEW

Book Review by: Faafetai Aiava (PhD Student, Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji)

The Trinity: Global Perspectives.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. 2007. Louisville, London:

Published by: Westminster John Knox Press.

The sheer magnitude and depth of Kärkkäinen's survey of global Trinitarian perspectives is enough to make someone of my caliber, feel somewhat under qualified to review. It is only under the presumption that others may be interested in understanding or studying the Trinity, but see the topic as too overwhelming that this review is offered. The work comprises 5 sections. Firstly, Kärkkäinen investigates the biblical roots of the Trinity in which he not only underscores the roles of both Testaments in the construction of the doctrine, but also necessitates a biblical foundation for the Trinity as the word itself is not one that is mentioned in the bible. Secondly, Kärkkäinen assesses the various challenges that arose from the (re)construction of the creeds in the third and fourth centuries, to the Patristic writers through Augustine and Aquinas. While this section offers a historical investigation of the doctrine's development, Kärkkäinen proceeds not in a chronological way but rather in a thematic way, outlining the era's overlapping yet still unresolved challenges. The challenges highlighted by Kärkkäinen

were comprised by the terminological confusion and the divergence in the theological starting point between Christians of the Greek East and the Latin West; the pitfalls of tritheism, subordinationism and modalism; as well as the emergence of Social Trinitarianism. The third and fourth sections engage a discussion of various Trinitarian thinkers from both the Western and the non-Western camps. From the West Kärkkäinen highlights prominent male and female scholars from the Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions; whereas from the non-West, Kärkkäinen surveys an array of Trinitarian perspectives from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Although the size of this section can be discouraging, it offers a pivotal contribution to knowledge in terms of putting the Trinity into perspective. It not only illustrates an influx of global interest in the doctrine, but it also demonstrates Kärkkäinen's ability to engage an extensive variety of gender-based, cultural and geographical perspectives from 17 different authors. In an effort to avoid a clumsy reductionist summary of the featured authors, Kärkkäinen makes a synthetic critique of some of the overarching themes in the final section. He closes not only with some of his own reflections but also with an agenda which intends "to invite theologians from various contexts to join the conversation" (384). It would be expected that a book of over 400 pages could not cover all there is on the Trinity. For instance, the implication of *Global Perspectives* as given in the book's subheading flaunts the idea that all regions of the globe are represented in some way or form. However, the absence of theologians from the liquid continents or the Pacific Islands including our bigger neighbors, New Zealand and Australia give rise to the counterclaim that this volume of *Global Perspectives* is almost global. Nevertheless, given the limited publications of the Trinity produced from the South Pacific region in comparison to Latin America, Asia and Africa, it is perhaps not surprising that their voices are yet to be heard in this book. Without taking anything away from Kärkkäinen's rather quantitative survey, this critique stems only out of the tall claim made by the subtitle, in tandem with the author's assertion that the "emerging non-Western



theologies of the Trinity need to be both affirmed and given a fair hearing” (397). Perhaps Kärkkäinen has reserved the affirmation and hearing of a Pacific perspective for another potential volume.

There also remains an issue with Kärkkäinen’s transition from the Western to the non- Western, particularly in the introduction of Part Four titled, “Trinitarian Reflections in the World Context” (257-264). Acting as a bridge connecting the Western and the non-Western views, the author engages in the highly anticipated, yet, underemphasized topic of contextual theology. Limited by his broad-brush approach to the entire book, Kärkkäinen quickly discusses the need to encounter the ‘other’ (non-Western implied), the recognition of a demographic macro reformation and the need for both universality and particularity in the search for truth in theological testimonies. Such an introduction, in my opinion, sets up the non-Western views as if it were in discontinuity with the Western or as if the theologies of the West were not done within a context. The lack of proper treatment of contextual theology, had ultimately led to the ‘Oversimplification’ that Kärkkäinen was hoping to avoid (264).

A more suitable introduction would be one that not only acknowledges, even if only briefly, the inevitability of contextualization but also one that explores the ‘macro reformation’ which has also taken place in relation to the theological starting points, from Scripture and Tradition (characteristic of the West), to the present human experience (a theme popularized mainly by the non-West). Given that he draws on a later publication by Bevans, there is uncertainty as to why Bevans’ *Models of Contextual Theology* (2002) was not consulted as a more appropriate bridge to the two crucial sections.

Again, the point here is that maintaining continuity between the West and non-West is essential in upholding the integrity and genuineness of the author’s call for ‘others’ to join the conversation.

This was for me, a critical omission in the book's main introduction or the final assessment and agenda. If it is true that "Christian theology has always been contextual" (262), then being 'contextual' implies that the so called 'other' is not in discontinuity. The rise of 'Communion Theology' attested to by Kärkkäinen is only one example where scholars both historical and contemporary, share an understanding of the Trinity as an eternal communion of love (387). This continuity is equally echoed in the Western views of Zizioulas, Moltmann and Pannenberg and the multiple views of theologians living in non-Western societies.

Had he pay more attention to the topic of 'contextual theology' and not treat it as though there is only one way of doing it and that all theologians across the globe were practicing it, Kärkkäinen would have presented his data in a way that it is not as pitched against one another but in a complementary way. Merely stating that all theology is contextual (xvii, 262, 397) or emphasising only the universal elements in the various contextual approaches does not do justice to the relationship between so called 'local' and what is prescribed as 'global.' The effect of such an approach would inherently mean that the voices of the particular are drowned in a universal deep. Although his intentions are substantiated by Moltmann's view that all truths are universal, it contradicts with his preliminary statement that context is an "asset rather than an obstacle" (xvii-xviii). If an asset is what context truly is, then Kärkkäinen does very little to prove it. The course of the book neither validates human experience/context as being another theological source alongside Scripture and Tradition, nor does it see truth as being incarnate in every culture. It was this aspect of contextual theology that stood as the most striking contributions of the non- West to the 'global' conversation.

On the whole, I do not put it lightly when I say that The Trinity is both a comprehensive and pragmatic exploration of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is comprehensive in the sense that the author Endeavour's to leave no stone unturned from the Patristic to the usual suspects, Zizioulas, Rahner,



Barth, Moltmann and Pannenberg (67-150). But more importantly for incorporating in its scope, the worthy contributions made by the non-West (257-380). In a pragmatic sense, Kärkkäinen has produced a work that it is highly readable and operates as a 'down-to-earth' explanation of key concepts, terms, and paradigms pertaining to the complexities of the doctrine. Coupled with an abundance of detailed and useful footnotes, the publication has, for someone of my naivety, proven itself a worthy tool for introductory purposes and as a great stepping stone for further inquiry. In addition, had the book come with a bibliography to corroborate the helpful footnotes, student accessibility would be one this book's greatest hallmarks.

## Information for Contributors

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The *Pacific Journal of Theology* is published twice yearly by the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS). It seeks to stimulate theological thinking and writing by Christians living in or familiar with the South Pacific, and to share these reflections with church and theological education communities, and with all who want to be challenged to reflect critically on their faith in changing times. Opinions and claims made by contributors to the journal are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board or SPATS and its constituent bodies, nor of associations with which the authors are affiliated.

The Editorial Board welcomes various kinds of writing that express an emerging Pacific theology. These may include:

- ◆ original articles in the theological disciplines
- ◆ articles relating theological thinking to Pacific cultures, contemporary issues and other academic disciplines
- ◆ helpful material for pastors and church workers (liturgical, pastoral, educational)
- ◆ artistic expressions of the Christian faith (poetry, visual art, music)
- ◆ notes and reviews of books that are relevant for Pacific Christians
- ◆ information about ongoing research in the theological disciplines in the Pacific.

*Guidelines for Authors* : The Editorial Board will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard and in keeping with the overall policy of the journal. Articles in English, French or Pacific languages will be considered. Poetry, photographs and black and white drawings are also welcome. Manuscripts must be previously unpublished and not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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- Relevance and/or currency of interest to the Pacific Islands.
- Contribution to current debates.
- Originality, balance, scholarship.
- Argument, organisation and presentation. the final decision to publish is retained by the Editor and the Editorial Board, who may also suggest editorial changes for all articles submitted for publication.

*Submissions*, addressed to the Editor, *PJT*, (see SPATS contact address, inside front cover), **must** comply with the following requirements:

*Maximum length*: 6000 words (book reviews 1000 words) including notes.

*Style*: Australian Government Publishing Service, *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, 5th edn; or the 6th edn revised by Snooks & Co. and published by Wiley in 2002.

*Spelling*: British (not American) spelling is preferred. Follows the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

*Notes*: In the manuscript, all notes, commencing on a new page, must be double-spaced end- (and not foot-) notes. Notes should be substantive only not documentation. In the text, the identifier, if in superscript,

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*Author and date referencing in text* (surname date:page) e.g. at the end of a clause or sentence, (Ernst 1994:8); or, within a sentence, 'Little (1996:212) notes that....'



Reference list, commencing on a new page, of all (and only) cited references listed alphabetically by author and, within author, by date, title and publisher. Use italics for book and journal titles, single inverted commas and minimal capitalisation for article titles, and no markings for presented papers or unpublished texts. Chapters and articles should show page numbers. See *Style*. e.g.:

Ernst, Manfred, 1994, *Winds of Change: rapidly growing religious groups in the Pacific Islands*, Pacific Conference of Churches, Suva.

Little, Jeanette, 1996, '... and wife: Mary Kaaialii Kahelemauna Nawaa, missionary wife and missionary', in *The Covenant Makers: Islander missionaries in the Pacific*, eds Doug Munro & Andrew Thornley, Pacific Theological College & Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji, pp. 210–34.

Cover page: A separate cover page must include: title, author's name, affiliation, postal, fax and e-mail addresses, and a list of any maps, figures etc. accompanying the text. Please include brief biographical data and a head-and-shoulders photo of the author, with any necessary information about the paper, e.g. details of where it was presented, in the case of a conference paper.

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Electronic submission: E-mail attachments addressed to the editor at the SPATS e-address are the fastest. A 3.5" diskette or CD-ROM is also acceptable. The electronic file must contain *all* files relevant to the manuscript. If hard copy is submitted, it is helpful to provide an electronic file as well.



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Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji

### **Kanana-Fou Theological Seminary**

PO Box 456, Pago Pago

American Samoa 96799

### **Malua Theological College**

Private Bag, Apia, Samoa

### **Marshall Islands Theological College**

PO Box 765, Majuro, Marshall Islands

### **Methodist Davuilevu Theological College**

PO Box 146, Nausori, Fiji Islands

### **Methodist Deaconess Training Centre**

PO Box 3757, Samabula, Suva, Fiji Islands

### **Moamoa Theological College**

PO Box 9226, Apia, Samoa

### **Pacific Regional Seminary**

### **Pacific Theological College**

Private Mail Bag, Suva, Fiji Islands

### **Piula Theological College**

PO Box 2284, Apia, Samoa

### **Seghe Theological Seminary**

Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia,  
Western Province, Solomon Islands

### **South Pacific Nazarene Theological College**

Naveiwakau, P.O. Valelevu

Nasinu, Fiji Islands

### **Sia'atoutai Theological College**

PO Box 44, Nuku'alofa, Tonga

### **St. John the Baptist's Theological College**

PO Box 35, Suva, Fiji Islands

### **St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College**

c/- 11B Sevuka Place, Namadi Heights  
Suva, Fiji Islands

### **Takamoa Theological College**

PO Box 93, Rarotonga, Cook Islands

### **Talua Ministry Training Centre**

PO Box 242, Santo, Vanuatu

### **Tangintebu Theological College**

PO Box 264, Bikenibeu, Tarawa  
Kiribati

### **United Theological College**

16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta  
NSW 2151, Australia

# **In This Issue**

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## **Book Review :**

Book Review by: Faafetai Aiava (PhD  
Student, Pacific Theological College,  
Suva, Fiji)

The Trinity: Global Perspectives.  
Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. 2007.

Louisville, London:

Published by: Westminster John  
Knox Press.